

provide security for Iraq's nationwide election in just under 2 weeks. Yes, the third successful election which will take place in just a few days.

Today, Iraqi security forces are strong enough to garrison and control cleared areas, as recently illustrated in the leading role taken by the Iraqis in the successful September 2005 offensive in Tal Afar. Both U.S. and Iraqi forces have enjoyed additional successes in eliminating insurgent strongholds in Fallujah, in Mosul, in Najaf, in Samarra, and in many other smaller towns along the Syrian border.

The increasing effectiveness of the Iraqi security forces has inspired optimism among the Iraqi people, and this is reflected in the growing number of intelligence tips from Iraqi civilians. According to reports in March 2005, Iraqi and coalition forces received 483 intelligence tips from Iraqi citizens. This figure rose to 3,300 in August and to more than 4,700 in September. This has translated into further public confidence in the security situation in Iraq.

Simultaneously, the increasing effectiveness of the Iraqi security forces has caused fear and derision within our enemies' ranks. Significant success securing the Syrian border, previously a sieve for Iraqi and foreign insurgents, has made it tougher for Syrian-based insurgents to orchestrate or support attacks in Iraq. As a result, homicide bombings by Islamic jihadists has reportedly been down 30 percent since the October constitutional referendum.

So the military and the security components of the strategy are laid out in the national strategy for victory in Iraq, as stated by the President, and it is due to the commitment of fighting men and women like my stepson, Doug, and his fiancée, but also thanks to the brave men and women of the Iraqi security forces who continue to fight for their emerging democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to look at the situation in Iraq, look at the threat posed by Iraq under the regime of Saddam Hussein, then look at Iraq today. There is no question that we are succeeding.

U.S. DETAINEE POLICY IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEEHAN. Well, Mr. Speaker, if so many of these Iraqis are ready to come up and to provide the security, the police work in the country, then surely there should be no problem with putting American forces into the background instead of having them up front.

The reality is that we have missed a lot of opportunities in Iraq because of a failed policy. Our own State Department polls say that 80 percent of Iraqis view the United States as an unpopular occupier. That is right, an occupier. Forty-five percent of Iraqi citizens

think it is morally okay to attack American troops. So if, in fact, Iraqis are ready to keep security in their own country, surely now is the time to let them do that.

We should have had, as General Shinseki said, more security forces in from the beginning. He said a few hundred thousand troops. And if we had had them there, maybe we could have won the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people from the beginning when Saddam Hussein fell. But the Pentagon and the civilian leadership thought General Shinseki did not know what he was talking about and they put him out to pasture. But the truth is, he knew what he was talking about.

There have been other mistakes made. In April of last year, the shocking photographic evidence of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib became public. In an instant, America's new image in the war on terror was published around the world with photos of Iraqi prisoners being subjected to cruel, unusual, and degrading treatment.

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A report by Major General Antonio Taguba found "numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses," constituting "systematic and illegal abuse of detainees" at Abu Ghraib. And, unfortunately, Abu Ghraib is only the most publicized case of torture in Iraq.

Regrettably, it has become clear that torture of detainees in United States custody is not limited to Abu Ghraib or even Iraq. Since Abu Ghraib, there have been increasing reports of torture. Most recently, The Washington Post broke a story of secret CIA detention centers around the globe where prisoners were being sent for questioning.

Under the leadership of President Bush and Vice President CHENEY, the United States has given up the moral high ground that we used to occupy as an international leader.

Last month, President Bush defended U.S. interrogation practices, proclaiming, "We do not torture." However, he has refused to back up these words. Instead, he and his administration have vehemently opposed a provision that would specifically prohibit the use of torture as official U.S. protocol.

They supported legislation that would strip the right of detainees being held by the United States to the writ of habeas corpus, an 800-year-old legal procedure grounded in the Magna Carta. Instead of denouncing torture is never acceptable, the administration seems to continually be looking for exceptions to the rule.

In the now-infamous "torture memo," along with other documents, the Justice Department sought to carve out an increasingly narrow definition of detention. Instead of firing administration officials, like Alberto Gonzales, who referred to the Geneva Convention as "quaint" and "obsolete," we have a President who pro-

moted him to the chief law enforcement officer of the United States of America, Attorney General.

By accepting this behavior, the Bush administration has not only hurt America's credibility around the world; but it has put our soldiers at risk.

I have joined forces with a number of my colleagues to try to change this course. However, the leadership in this body has kept us from being heard. We have tried to obtain documents related to Federal investigations of detainee abuse in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo; but our efforts have been shut down by the majority in this body.

Mr. Speaker, 173 Members of this body have signed onto the Waxman legislation to establish an independent commission to investigate these abuses; but nearly 6 months after being introduced, this bill languishes in committee without even a hearing from the majority.

President Bush and the majority did not want the independent 9/11 Commission. They have also opposed independent commissions to investigate the Federal response to Hurricane Katrina. But just like the revelations that came from the 9/11 Commission, an independent investigation into our detainee policy would help us all in the end.

It is time to investigate these abuses. It is never too late to regain our credibility around the world. I call on my colleagues to stand up against torture by standing firm to the belief that the United States has held for generations, that no individual in U.S. custody be subject to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, any time, any place, anywhere.

CONGRESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARCHANT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, there are two things I want to address tonight, both terribly disappointing to me as a freshman Member of Congress.

As a former judge who sent hundreds or thousands of people to prison for felony crimes, I have heard and seen all kinds of stories. But the one that played out last week makes me both heartsick and very angry. A valiant Vietnam veteran, a man of courage and daring, a Navy pilot, a defender of this country, an ace, a true military leader by example, pled guilty, basically, to accepting bribes to push defense contracts to contractors who may not have been entitled to them.

For those of us who have served in the military, we know what it is to requisition supplies, equipment or services and get quality in response. On the other hand, we also know what it is to receive supplies, equipment or services and wonder who in the world got their bank account padded or their